DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 156 SP 035 578

AUTHOR Cairns, Len
TITLE "I Got the Power": Teacher Educators, Teachers and Empowerment.
PUB DATE Jul 94
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Teacher Education Association (24th, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, July 3-6, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Active Learning; *Educational Theories; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Metaphors; Opinion Papers; *Personal Autonomy; *Program Design; *Student Responsibility; *Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Influence; Teaching Models
IDENTIFIERS Assumptions (Testing); Australia; *Empowerment

ABSTRACT

In the current climate of empowerment models, critical research, and deconstructed theory, this discussion raises some questions regarding the concept of "empowerment" and its use as a rubric for course and program design in teacher education. From the review of literature several usages of the term empowerment emerge. Each one is examined, criticized, and largely rejected as inappropriate, or at least incomplete, for educational usage. The assumption that empowerment deals with emancipating marginalized people would depend largely on the way the concept is given meaning. Personal and social empowerment are acceptable categories, but too simple. Three anecdotes illustrate the perceived pitfalls in the concepts functional reality empowerment, perceived empowerment, and projected empowerment or attributed power. From the examination of the various concepts, three common usages by teachers and teacher educators of the term empowering are identified, criticized, and rejected: empowering as bestowment of power, as generation of power, and as enablement of power. An acceptable alternative concept is offered by way of conclusion. As the title of the paper infers, the concept of "my power," arising within individuals and their social groups, is proposed as a meaningful outcome that emphasizes power in the personal autonomy sense. This interpretation implies that if empowerment is to be an actuality, it must be facilitated by educational structures and functions in which the student has greater personal control over the learning situation. (Contains 31 references.) (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 376 156

"I GOT THE POWER": TEACHER EDUCATORS, TEACHERS AND EMPOWERMENT

LEN CAIRNS

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MONASH UNIVERSITY GIPPSLAND CAMPUS

Abstract

This paper is heretical. In the current climate of empowerment models, critical research and deconstructed theory, this discussion seeks to ask some questions regarding the concept of "empowerment" and its use as a term and a rubric for course and programme design in teacher education. It is argued that much of the language of empowerment theory is still constrained by implicit models of deficiency and that the theory should move to a more open learner-managed and controlled paradigm.

A paper presented at the 24th Annual Conference of the *Australian Teacher Education Association*, "Empowering The Professional: Politics, Policy and Practice", Brisbane, July, 1994.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Copying sponsored by Konica

In questioning the way the term *empowerment* has become such a feature of much of today's educational rhetoric one runs a risk of alienating many genuinely altruistically motivated colleagues and others who hold strong ideologically based views on education.

This paper is critical of the way the term *empowerment* is used in many educational programmes, writings and discussions and how it has become something of a popularist icon for both railing against injustice and inequity and as a rallying point for academics who see their role as enhancing social justice through teacher education and classroom schooling, enabling the disadvantaged and minorities to access power, lifting the oppression on others in society and encouraging groups to take control of their own destinies.

As Leslie Ashcroft neatly pointed out in 1987:

> "Empower, empowered, empowering, empowerment: say the words and watch the barriers fly up. Empowering sounds risky, disturbing to the status quo, radical and political. It can also sound like just more educational jargon, the latest buzz word for the academic community." (p. 142)

This paper is not attempting to argue that the idealism, the motivation for the urge to encourage or develop *empowered* learners is wrong or even misguided. The argument of this paper is that much of the *empowerment rhetoric* has fallen into hackneyed or even trite sloganeering and that many users of the terminology need to explore more carefully the language and meaning of their advocacy and easy acceptance of an assumed commonality of meaning. This is an attempt to do that.

In the social psychology of the 1960's and 1970's (Hollander, 1967) the concept of "power" was usually analysed within the context of the structure and functioning of social groups or leadership. One of the influential models of power was that of French and Raven (1960). For these writers

Copying sponsored by Konica

power could be described in five "types: *Referent power* (involves power from identification with others), *Legitimate power* (which involves power from legitimate structures or roles), *Expert power* (which describes power based on skill, information considered valuable), *Coercive power* (which is power that utilises threat, punishment or rejection) and *Reward power* (which comes as a result of using resources and reinforcers to gain power).

Power, as a social interaction element between people has long fascinated philosophers, psychologists and educators. Russell writing in the 1930's, saw power as the way one person or a group produces intended effects in others, Dewey (1916) in his classic work, *Democracy and Education,* argues for power as a "capacity" or "potentiality" for growth, a positive force present in the "immature" learner (p 49). Dewey argues that "power to grow depends upon the need for others and plasticity" (p 62). His concept of "plasticity" is described as "the power to learn from experience" (p 62) and he carefully points out that this team is "something quite different from the plasticity of putty or wax" (p 52). As he classifies the concept:

> "It is essentially the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation. This means power to modify actions on the basis of the results of prior experiences, the power to *develop dispositions.* Without it, the acquisition of habits is impossible." (p 53)

The psychotherapist, Carl Rogers, writing in his 1980 text *A Way of Being,* described how "power" was a central feature of his theory and person-centred education conceptualisation. Utilising a humanistic psychology Rogers stated that:

Copying sponsored by Konica

> "Perhaps the most dramatic and far-reaching future significance of our work is simply our way of being and acting as a staff. To create a climate where power is shared, where individuals are empowered, where groups are dealt with as being trustworthy and competent to face problems - this is unheard of in ordinary life. Our schools, our government, our businesses and corporations are permeated with the view that neither the individual nor the group is trustworthy. There must be power *over*, power to control." (pp 200-201)

The Rogerian view of a learner-centred approach was seen by some critics of the 1970's and early 1980's as either idealistic and parented by the flower-power psychology of the west coast of the USA and the "touchy-feely" stereotyping common to these reactions *or* as the harbinger of reform and the beginning of a revolution in educational thinking with a "freeing" of the learner and a change in the role of teachers to that of a "facilitator-learner". Such a person "relinquishes control over others, retaining control only over himself or herself" (p 302).

The literature on the concept *power* is extensive. Different perspectives, from the position of different disciplines (psychology, sociology, marxist theory, critical theory, etc.) offer variations on the perspectives on this significant construct. It is tempting to list the many theories and theorists and attempt to group them such as Weber and Parsons as "structural-functionalists" or Dahl as a "pluralist" and so on but this does not do justice to the theories, their breadth or depth and smacks of a first year student's exam crib list. (Those who want to examine a quite useful sample of many of the theorists on defining power as a concept should find Steven Lukes' book *Power*, (1986) useful. In this edited volume Lukes offers chapters by Parsons, Dahl, Weber, Arendt, Goldman, JK Galbraith, Foucoult, etc.)

There have been a number of discussions of the concept of power and empowerment in recent publications. We are told by Gross (1985) that the term "power comes the French word *potere*, meaning "to be able" (p 138), while Common (1987) tells us that "the word *power* comes from its Latin root meaning "to be able". Ashcroft (1987), again neatly, refers to "the root word 'power'

Copying sponsored by Konica

with origins in both Latin and French, means most simply "to be able; to have the ability to do or act" (p 142).

Whatever the etymology of the word *power,* it is evident that the history of a concern with social power, policies and education has developed considerably over the past decade so that the view that "the idea of power has lain more completely neglected in education studies than in any other discipline that is of fundamental social interest" put by Nybeng in 1981 would certainly be inappropriate in 1994!

Today's texts such as Shor's *Empowering Education* (1992) and Romanish's, *Empowering Teachers,* (1991) argue for education to be clearly seen as analysed from a socially critical perspective - Shor's first Chapter is entitled "Education In Politics: An Agenda for Empowerment" (1992). The point here is that a good deal of the development of the notions, theoretical construction and positioning of the *empowerment* argument and rhetoric should be seen in teams of the historical context and the theoretical development of critical theory and post structuralist and post modernist developments (Craib, 1992; Roth, 1992; Simon, 1987; Smith, 1993).

Gross (1985) argues in his introduction, and it is on the surface a viable and succinct (if a little simplistic) description of some of the roots of "empowerment" in the USA that:

> "Widespread interest in the subject of power was stimulated in the late 1960's. A youthful generation was "burning out" in a doomed attempt to change a political - economic system which was resisting its efforts to remove the United States from an unpopular war and to guarantee the civil rights of blacks and other minorities. Frustration over the inability to impact the system would lead to a failure of "power to the people" strategies and a widespread feeling of helplessness. Later there were to be an "identification with the aggressor", expressed in a return by many youth to the norms of conventionality; an increased interest in spiritual and internal paths to self-actualisation and transcendence (to gain power over self); and the much discussed narcissistic concentrations on the "we" decade" (p 137).

Copying sponsored by Konica

This brief precis could be characterised, I would argue, as the decade of "enflowerment" rather than "empowerment". The attempts for peace and love, symbolised by the "flower power", "flower children", associated with the youth of the era but which led to a loss of power and a further marginalisation could be seen as part of the pragmatic precusor conditions which fed the rise of a more politically focused (and for some more politically "aware") generation to follow.

We now turn from these historical and definitional considerations to the nub of the argument in this paper.

I wish to argue in this paper that much of the recent and current writing on the concept of *empowerment* and advocacy that such an idea should inform and be incorporated into Teacher Education and Schooling has some problems. (I avoid the equally over used term "problematic"). The problems I wish to focus upon are that our assumptions, language, examples and discussion of *empowerment* need further consideration, broader reaction and basically are open to an accusation of being the epitome of an academic arrogance that needs close attention.

As discussed so far, the terms "power" and "empowerment" are now frequently involved in discussions of how teacher education and schooling should be more socially critical and deal with marginalised groups. As Smith (1993) states in his discussion of empowerment in critical education research:

> "The values they espouse are those which potentially serve the interests of the traditionally marginalised, silenced and oppressed. That is to say, the moral imperative of critical research is human emancipation and social justice. Working from the premise of structured inequalities and constructed inequalities along lines of 'race', class and gender, the values guiding the critical researcher aim to empower the disadvantaged/disenfranchised in order "to break the bonds of silence which continue to oppress" (Ramdas, 1990)" (p 76)

Copying sponsored by Konica

In a similar vein, McConnell (1992) writing on the place of literacy in empowerment invokes the work of Freire in his "concern with the liberation of people from oppression" (p 124) and then defines empowerment in terms such as:

> Empowerment, then, may also be viewed as a process through which groups of people are liberated from oppressive social and cultural norms and practices. (p 124)

Further, Ira Shor in his book *Empowering Education* (1992) presents an approach in which he advocates that tertiary educators should move from teacher-led talk to empowering education by engaging in a dialogic, problem-posing approach. He describes this as a "critical pedagogy" which utilises "participatory problem-posing" instead of lectures. As Shor puts it:

> An empowering teacher does not talk knowledge *at* students but talks *with* them. (p 85) *and* Empowering education as I present it here is a dialogic pedagogy. Mutual discussion is the heart of the method. Dialogue is simultaneously structured and creative. It is initiated and directed by a critical teacher but is democratically open to student intervention. (p 85)

Another, closer to home example, is presented by Barbara Comber who in 1987 offered a description of "three successful teachers" who interact to "empower both learners and teachers" (p 192). Comber's three key assertions or assumptions are interesting in this context. She argues that:

> " • successful teaching is not accidental;
> • it takes a powerful teacher to empower students;
> • the teacher's role is both central and crucial" (p 182)

Taking these examples as a broadly reasonable sample of some of the rhetoric in the area I now wish to turn to what the issues or problems are in the field.

Copying sponsored by Konica

First, I would argue that *empowerment* is a multifaceted concept and that the assumption that it deals with emancipating the marginalised depends largely on the way the concept is given meaning.

Two background views might be helpful here before we embark on the crux of the argument in this paper.

Leslie Ashcroft (1987) in a paper entitled "Defusing 'Empowerment': The What and the Why" opens up some very useful questions and points of relevance to the argument of the present paper. Ashcroft in a quite wide ranging paper on the concept presents as part of her discussion what she calls the "Scientific Application of Power" where she discusses the analogy of "power" and the analysis of "energy" in physics. Her point is that if the analogy is pursued, we can accept that as scientists agree "energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be transformed, that is, changed from one form to another" (p 149) and apply a similar notion to power.

The possible view emanating from the pursuit of this analogy is that there is a Zero sum game - power cannot be created nor destroyed - merely redistributed or reallocated. This single quantum view is probably a way too simplistic but the idea spawns some useful thinking. As Ashcroft places it:

> The analogous statement in the human realm would be a firm belief in the potential energy and capability of human beings and a recognition that we *need* not give energy to another (that is pointless, since others have it present already) and that we *cannot* give energy to another (it must come from within). (p 149)

Barnes (1988) offers an interesting discussion of Parson's "banking nation" as an alternative to a zero-sum conception of power. In Barnes' critique there is an important caveat:

Copying sponsored by Konica

> Just as alternative definitions of power and alternative methods of measuring power have been sustained by opposed political convictions and objectives, so too have alternative theories of power. In the study of power, as in practically every other area of study, sociologists have been unable to differentiate technical explanatory concerns from polemical and propagandist objectives. (p 18)

Parenti (1978) also refers to the Bentrand Russell concept that power is as fundamental to the analysis of political affairs as "energy is the fundamental concept in physics" (p 3) and he (Parenti) goes on to extend the analogy in his initial discussion of "what we mean by 'Power' in his opening chapter.

The idea of a quantum of power, shared around in some socially negotiated way, has an interesting background. That power is a concept nested within relationships between people (whether as individuals or within groups, classes, structures) is fairly self-evident. Some insights can be gained by reading Lukes (1974, 1986) and Burbules (1986).

The two points about the giving of energy (power) and the giver's "need" are useful to hold in mind for parts of the following discussion.

A second background view I offer at this stage is from Smith's (1993) discussion of the concept of empowerment.

Smith's argument is that from his review of the research and writing in "Educational research, curriculum development, critical pedagogy, literacy and human services" he has been able to identify "three ways in which empowerment is conceived and used in education and social discourses".

Copying sponsored by Konica

The three constructions are:

1. That which emerges from social psychology and is "concerned with self-growth and personal liberation from dependency. (p 77)

2. That which emerges from the "discourse of critical theory" and is "concerned with a political reading of the world and the unmasking of false consciousness".

3. That which emerges from the "discourse of social activism" and is "concerned with strategic resistance and social transformation through the mobilisation of collective action". (p 77)

I would argue that there are other aspects or facets of the multifaceted concept *empowerment* that we need to consider carefully in addition to the above points.

Empowerment is both *personal* and *social*. Personal empowerment is obviously that which is seen by the self to be significant. Notions of self-esteem, self-attribution of causality, internality, assertiveness, self-actualisation and a feeling of control over one's own life rather than a dependency on others are all features of this notion (Gross, 1985). Social empowerment is the meaning which has most currency - the way social reference, group support, power in social settings, influence over societal decisions, involvement in political action all "empower" groups, members of unions, clubs, societies, to change, influence or direct action.

I would further argue however that this simple discussion is merely one dimension of the many facets of empowerment.

Copying sponsored by Konica

I wish to offer three other "aspects" of empowerment.

1. Functional reality empowerment.
2. Perceived empowerment.
3. Projected empowerment.

Functional reality empowerment

This rather pretentiously worded "category" of empowerment is meant to cover a range of views and ideas. The title is tentative and needs review, revision and critical reflection.

The essence of the notion behind this conceptualisation is summed up in a consideration of the following "scenarios". I ask you to read and reflect on these three situational descriptions.

Scenario One: Sparky and the Professor

Recently I found myself with a two-hour time to wait for an evening meeting with a colleague. We were to meet at a suburban hotel where we would decide on whether we would then move on to a restaurant to discuss a new book we were proposing to joint author.

I arrived with two hours to kill and decided to move into the public bar of the hotel for a quiet drink before my colleague arrived. It was 6.30 pm.

As I entered the bar I noticed three things. There were no women present except for the bar-maid. There were about ten patrons, six in one group and two pairs, one pair seated in the corner at a table - both of them looked to be over 60 years of age - and the six together were standing near the taps at the bar. All of the six wore either overalls, or shorts and the ubiquitous blue singlet. Three had cigarettes (roll your own) in their mouths and spoke around them without removing them. All were roughly my age.

Copying sponsored by Konica

I bought a beer and stood near the six minding my own business.

The conversation of the six was not hard to overhear - it was loud, boisterous and filled with male banter. I smiled once or twice at the puns and the cracks as I sat quietly. The conversation moved to football and a disagreement about who had played best in the Bombers versus Collingwood the previous Saturday. The man closest to where I stood was called "Sparky" by his friends and after a couple of assertive comments from him to the group and a couple of fun rebuffs he turned to me and said

"What do you reckon mate? Aren't I right?"
The others paused and waited for my answer.
"Yeh, I think you are right there. Collingwood's definitely going to win the flag this year."
"See, he said and slapped me on the back. Sparky's my name - what's yours?"
"Michael", I said "pleased to meet you" (the latter slipped out of habit and pattern)
"Ooh" went three of the others and then they parroted "pleased to meet you!".

I flushed a little but took it in my stride.

Sparky, not to be deviated from his opening gambit went on.

"What ya do for a crust Mike?"
"I'm an academic. I work at the University."
"Eh? You mean you're a Professor or a Scientist or somethin like that?"
"Yes, you could say that. I teach Education. Educational Psychology."
Sparky turned to his colleagues, grinned and then launched into what was immediately apparent as his pet "hobby horse".
"Bloody schools. They've gone off. My two kids aren't learning near enough mate. These bloody teachers went on strike last month too - bunch of no hopers if you ask me!"
"Ah, yes, but I don't teach in schools - I am at the University."

Copying sponsored by Konica

Sparky, warming to his topic, proceeded to hold forth, gaining support from his peers, who echoed, in personal anecdotes, similar views. I tried particularly uncomfortably, to reply, defend teachers and schooling and to answer the questions and assertively put opinions. I was flustered, out of my place, fumbling, inept. Finally Sparky, the obvious "top man" in this group of drinkers said.
"Gees Prof, you don't know much about this do you. I reckon you're one of those ivory tower types. No offence, but you really don't have a clue about what we're on about do you?!"

Scenario Two: The "Star"

We were through the airport security check and had been checked as to our boarding passes and we were walking across the hot Delhi tarmac towards the Indian Airlines Airbus for Bombay.

As my wife, two children and I mounted the front steps to board, a steward or airline official in navy trousers and jacket looked over our heads to a couple walking behind us and suddenly leapt down the steps hissing at me and waving his arms.

"Sss - back, make way" he hissed. I stopped. My wife and children were on the fourth and fifth steps and I was on the second from the bottom. They were narrow, steep and as I was carrying 3 bags I was not inclined to retreat down the steps. The official insisted, pushing my wife, me and two children back and off the steps. With some protests we were unceremoniously pushed, shoved and jostled aside and the couple behind were ushered, with great reverence to the steps. He was around 45, quite overweight, wearing sunglasses and lots of gold chains and rings. She was similarly of very heavy build, sari clad and also wore sun glasses. They regally proceeded up the stairs. Once they were at the top, the official, who had continued to bar our way moved aside and pointed up the steps. We began to climb.

When we were inside and a hostess asked if we would like a plastic cup of cordial I ventured to inquire. "Who are they - that pair sitting two seats in front of us?"
"Oh, that's a famous Hindi movie star" she said. "Very famous, very important".

Copying sponsored by Konica

Scenario Three - "The Jerk"

Three of us arrived at the party at the same time. I was alone and had been invited to join the Saturday afternoon party/barbecue by a work friend. The other two arriving at the gate as I did were not known to me. He was short, balding, overweight, "nuggetty" and tanned. When he smiled he was missing a few front teeth and the others were discoloured. She was blond, thin, sad looking, but much younger. We smiled and went through the gate around the side and into the group around the pool.

Our host, John, leapt forward, arms out and lunged at the bald fat guy with crook teeth. "Hi Bob!" he effused and kissed "Jane" on the Cheek. He then turned and greeted me as well in an open and friendly way.

The party "raged on" - mostly talk, drink and food. I noticed that whoever Bob spoke to listened intently, appeared to defer to him, laughed at his poor jokes and he was never without two or three people at his side immersed in his conversation. After an hour or two I joined one of the groups of four who were listening intently to Bob. He was holding forth about how he liked his steak "really charcoaled" and that once when he was out at a dinner at a restaurant the "idiot waiter" told him that a too well done steak would be tough, "So I told him it wouldn't be as tough as I'd be if he bought it to me with any red showing!" They all laughed and waited for Bob's next pearl of wisdom.

I couldn't figure out how he held the floor and what else he must have been talking about for all and sundry to have been so interested in his conversation if the sample I had was his usual.

I ventured a comment to Bob.

"What to you think of Keating's Republican idea Bob?"

"What?"

I repeated the question. Bob looked at me with furrowed brow, then laughed and said. "I never pay any attention to politics - they're all a bunch of _____"

Copying sponsored by Konica

I changed tack. "What about the bit in the paper yesterday about the local hospital being closed - that's not a good idea is it? I said, now tentative.

"No" said Bob's girlfriend, "I spent a week there last year and it's a damn shame it it's going to close" "Who cares", said Bob. "I never worry about that stuff - it isn't important to me. You have to get your priorities in life right you know".

"Yes" echoed two other guys who glared at me and Bob's lady.

I stood and listened to further comments that seemed to be thrown into the pool, float a second and sink from sight. There was no discussion, no linkage between comments. Most were Bob's. He was obviously very self-assured. He was deferred to. His lunch was served first, all present waited on his every comment.

As I left the party I asked our host John, who Bob was.

"He's the coach of the best football team in the area. He's a really intelligent important bloke. In fact he's the most powerful guy in the region".

These three scenarios are three different situations yet they have a common thread. A self-assured, educated, middle class person placed in three different social situations which involve social, cultural and personal stereotypes but which also illustrate the complexity, transitory or situation specific nature of some elements (or facets) of empowerment. In the three scenarios it can be asked who has power? What is the basis of the power? How does the person who has personal empowerment find that empowerment challenged? Changed? How is the person put in what he/she sees as a disempowered social position?

It is argued that the concept of functional reality empowerment is best illustrated or understood by reference to the notion of the observation of the "scene" by an external observer. In Scenario One, the marginialised person, the 'odd person out' was the professor. The character "Sparky" was, in his

Copying sponsored by Konica

personal and social situation, empowered. This was both real empowerment and functional in this social setting. Moreover, in Sparky's broader life and social functioning it is likely that his empowerment was both in personal and social terms for his daily and family functioning a reality for him. In his social interactions he is unlikely to experience any direct disempowerment or feelings that he belongs to a group/class/sector of society that is in need of empowerment. His political power is the same as the professor in terms of his vote counting on polling day. His local influence over others is apparently strong. He "gets his own way".

Perceived empowerment

The concept of *perceived empowerment* is a term that attempts to draw on both psychological and sociological underpinnings to describe how a person perceives either self or others to hold and display power. One can either exert this power, display it, proclaim it, operate it upon others or perceive it as affecting you from an external source. This notion covers the way power was perceived by the Indian Airlines official in the high status actors but was not perceived by the visitor from another culture in Scenario Two. If there was a "test" for power's presence *both* the writer and the actors would score on a perception of personal power but the social/cultural situation of their interrelation led to the writer not perceiving the power of the others and misreading the social power present. (that it was based on a particular status not relevant to the visitor is not particularly relevant).

Projected empowerment

The concept of *projected empowerment* is different from the previous two forms. Projected power could also be described as *attributed power* - that social power that one person or group attributes (rightly or wrongly) to another person or group. In Scenario Three the host John attributes power to the football coach but the narrator did not have the same basis (status recognition perhaps?) to so attribute. The visitor saw "Bob" as a jerk, not very informed, shallow etc on his criteria for interaction but the host John reported a different view of Bob and his position and "power".

Copying sponsored by Konica

We could explore a range of deficiencies in these personal narrative Scenarios as data for exemplifying the concepts but that probably will distract us from the ongoing argument.

I want to further elaborate on other "facets" of the multifaceted conceptualisation of 'power' and its relevance to the theme of the paper.

The psychosocial argument which pervades this paper leads me also to offer the following warning about *Fool's power*.

Fool's power, I suggest, is akin in conceptualisation to fool's gold - it is thought to be recognised as real power by the person identifying it but is less than real. It is also probable that people who feel or believe that "power" is inherent in them as a person or in the group of which they are a member is somehow fixed or imutable. I want to argue, but this point is quite tentative and speculative at this stage of the position, that a person who has a high sense of personal power in say their work situation may fall foul of 'fools' power when they move to a social setting. Television and movie comedies have been built around this notion whereby the powerful character in one setting is a joke in the other. The famous play the Admirable Crichton about the shipwrecked aristocratic British family whose existence on an island leads to the butler (Crichton) becoming the "guv" and "king" of the group by way of his personal skills, knowledge etc and his acquisition of personal and social power (he become the boss). The Lord's "fool's power" by way of his birthright position becomes evident when he cannot cope. Another example of fool's power is the totally misplaced belief about power. On T.V. the comedy *Married with Children,* has as its central character Al Bundy, who believes he is powerful and in control but who is a misogynist bumbling idiot in reality who continually experiences power failure but usually doesn't see it that way. It could also be argued that the idea that underpins assumed power by belonging to a particular group (eg men, whites etc) automatically conferring power in other situations and interactions is a form of "fool's power".

I don't wish to pursue the concept at length here, merely to introduce the notion for debate, possible destruction or elaboration.

Copying sponsored by Konica

In her discussion of "empowering", Ashcroft mentions the "spectacles" metaphor applied by Diamond in his teacher education course based on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. As Ashcroft describes the idea, the "spectacles" as a metaphor are more appropriate as they convey how "personal constructs aren't kept as past experiences in knapsacks or filing cabinets, rather they continually influence how a person goes on to experience and *perceive*" (p153). Whilst Ashcroft rejects this metaphor for empowering and instead accepts one based on a "fine mesh screen" (p154) the "spectacles" metaphor, I believe could be a simple useful point to assist the next section of this paper.

Let us imagine, that in the spirit of the spectacles metaphor, we each have a range of colours, frames, and focal length spectacles in our repertoire of possible pairs we can wear. These represent the various *views* of power we might see - depending on which spectacles we put on. We might, for example see:

- academic power
- political power
- societal power
- gender power
- Koorie power
- gang power and so on.

The questions of whose power? power for what? and the notions of whether power is, or can be, a shared concept (same spectacles?) are all worth further exploration.

So, in terms of the paper's title and central point, where has this consideration of the various issues, definitional questions and views led us?

A central point I wish to argue is that there appear to be at least three common usages by teacher educators and teachers of the term *empowering*.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Copying sponsored by Konica

The three usages I have identified are:

1. empowering as *bestowment* of power
2. empowering as *generation* of power
3. empowering as *enablement* of power

Empowering as *bestowment* of power

The first usage of the empowering term I wish to briefly discuss is the way many academics and other writers refer to their actions in empowering others as if it is a "gift" to those they claim to be empowering. This notion generally occurs within the context of descriptions or comments to the effect that:

> "I empower my students"
>
> "I teach an empowerment course"
>
> "The approach I take in this course is aimed at empowering the students", and so on.

The apparent assumption which I would argue is detectable in this type of usage of the term is that the academic, the teacher educator, the teacher believes that they can somehow, by their actions as teachers, *bestow* empowerment. I will return to this gifting notion below.

Empowerment as *generation* of power

This usage of the term empowering assumes that the teacher educators or teachers can (and do) utilise behaviours in their teaching which cause their less powerful students to begin to develop and generate power. The intention of those *in power* in this usage is not to give power but rather to directly cause their students to develop, demonstrate and utilise new found power which has been generated by the students.

Copying sponsored by Konica

Empowerment as *enablement* of power

This usage of the term relates to teachers (at whatever level) attempting to create conditions and contexts in which students may develop and demonstrate that they can exercise power. This empowerment differs from the concept of generation of power by virtue of the less direct teacher intention. In *enabling* empowerment the teacher is providing broad conditions, structures and interactions which will enable the students, should they undertake to involve aspects of such behaviour to show empowerment actions. The teacher neither *gives* empowerment nor attempts to directly *generate* empowerment.

In both of the first two usages of the term empowering, the academic, teacher educator, teacher, that is the *empowerer* believes that their actions directly lead to their students showing empowerment. Inherent in this assumption (or set of assumptions by the empowerers) is an implicit concept that the student is somehow deficient of power or in need of empowering.

At its worst, this assumption could be said to be a manifestation of an academic arrogance, for to believe that one (with power) can give, bestow or generate power in someone else who is perceived to be without power smacks of "playing god". Who has given the attempting empowerer the right, privilege and ability to transfer power in such a way? Does wanting it to happen, motivated by whatever righteous intent, lessen the superiority inherent in such a belief and behaviour?

If the accusation of a form of academic arrogance is too harsh as a criticism and is deemed to be too severe then it could be argued that the self professed *empowerer* could be better described as being either idealistic or naive. The idealism may be misguided in the true sense of that word or may be a demonstration of a naivete that "Sparky" (of our first scenario) would clearly level at the academics.

These criticisms are harsh words, particularly for those whose ideals and intentions are truly honourable and loaded with intent to assist those they perceive to be less powerful in society.

Copying sponsored by Konica

An alternative view:

All is not gloom. Those amongst us who believe that education is a social, non neutral activity do have alternative concepts and propositions worthy of consideration in this debate.

As the title of this paper (and the recent popular song it echoes) suggests, "I got the power" is a chant which asserts (with apparent African-American idiom overtones) a personal power and autonomy. The concept of "my power", arising within the individuals and their social groups as an assertion that is unsolicited and yet supported is a meaningful outcome that emphasises empowerment in the personal autonomy sense.

I want to argue that this class of empowerment can be facilitated in education by means of educational structures and functions. The structures which contribute to this style of development are those in which the student has, in reality, greater personal control over the learning situation. Such structures (be they courses or whole institutional arrangements) can be described under such terms as Active Learning, Independent Learning, Experiential Learning or the broader term Learner Managed Learning (Cairns, 1993). Such a scheme involves the Learner as both the centre and the real controller of the learning he or she engages in as the activity is undertaken. This shift in the locus of control of the learning action from the teacher to the learner is most appropriate for adult learners but does have relevance with younger learners.

If empowerment is to be an actuality as an outcome of and as part of the process of educational endeavour then the way the educational enterprise is structured in role terms and functions for the learners is paramount to this development. It is not enough for us to advocate either *bestowment* or to attempt to have our students *generate* empowerment. We need to create and operate within structures that go beyond *enablement* to facilitate the learner having personal and system autonomy. The Rogerian teacher as facilitator was a start but the more recent moves to negotiated, learner controlled and managed courses, curricula and outcome contracts in Higher Education (Stephenson in Graves, 1993) are a step towards a reality of educational empowerment that is both exciting and enabling.

Copying sponsored by Konica

References

Ashcroft, L., "Defining Empowering: The What and the Why", *Language Arts*, 64(2), 1987, pp. 142-156.

Barnes, B., *The Nature of Power*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988.

Barry, B. (ed), *Power and Political Theory*, John Wiley, London, 1976.

Boulding, K.E., *Three Faces of Power*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, 1989.

Burbules, N., "A theory of power in education", *Educational Theory*, 36, 1986, pp. 95-114.

Cairns, L., "Learner-Managed-Learning: A Metaphor for Educational Revolution?" Chapter 11 in Graves, N. (ed), *Learner Managed Learning*, HEC and WEF, Leeds, 1993.

Comber, B., "Celebrating and Analyzing Successful Teaching", *Language Arts*, 64(2), 1987, 182 - 195.

Common, D.L., "Power: The Missing Concept in the Dominant Model of School Change", *Theory into Practice*, XXVI Special Issue, 1987, pp. 338-345.

Craib, I., *Modern Social Theory*, 2nd Edition, Harvester Wheatsleaf, New York, 1992.

Dewey, J., *Democracy and Education*, The Macmillan Co, New York, 1916.

Ellsworth, E., "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy", *Harvard Educational Review*, 1989, 59(3), 297-324.

Giroux, H.A., "Rethinking the Language of Schooling", *Language Arts*, 61(1), 1984, pp.33-40.

Giroux, H.A. & McLaren, P., "Teacher Education and the Politics of Engagement: The Case for Democratic Schooling", *Harvard Education Review*, 56, 1986, pp. 213-238.

Gross, S.J. "Personal Power and Empowerment", *Contemporary Education*, 1985, 56(3), pp. 137 -143.

Henderson, J.G., "Curriculum Discourse and the Question of Empowerment", *Theory into Practice*, 1992, XXXI, (3), 204-209.

Copying sponsored by Konica

Liston, D.P & Zeichner, K.M., "Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education", *Journal of Education*, 1987, 169, pp. 117-137.

Lukes, S., *Essays in Social Theory*, Macmillan, London, 1977.

Lukes, S., (ed), *Power*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

Lukes, S., *Power: A Radical View*, Macmillan, London, 1974.

McClelland, D.C., *Power: The Inner Experience*, Irvington Publisher, New York, 1975.

McConnell, S., "Literacy and empowerment" *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 15(2), 1992, pp. 123-138.

Mann, M., *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

Noblit, G.W., "Power and Caring", *American Educational Research Journal*, 1993, 39(1), pp. 23-38.

Olsen, M.E. (ed), *Power in Societies*, The Macmillan Co, New York, 1970.

Parenti, M., *Power and the Powerless*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1978.

Rogers, C.R., *A Way of Being* , Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, 1980.

Romanish, B., *Empowering Teachers*, University Press of America, Lanham, MD, 1991.

Roth, J., "Of What Help is He? A Review of Foucault and Education" *American Educational Research Journal*, 1992, 29(4), pp. 683-694.

Shor, I., *Empowering Education*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.

Simon, R.I., "Empowerment as a Pedagogy of Possibility", *Language Arts*, 64, (4) 1987, pp. 370-383.

Smith, R., "Potentials for Empowerment in Critical Education Research", *The Australian Education Researcher*, 1993, 20(2), pp. 75-93.

Copying sponsored by Konica